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How Well Fed Are We In The United States

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A broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman and Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, June 3, 1941, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over stations associated with the NBC Blue Network.

--ooOoo--

WALLACE KADDERLY:

And from Washington we continue our series of Tuesday broadcasts on nutrition....human nutrition. This time Dr. Hazel Stiebeling and Ruth Van Deman are with us....to give a chapter based on the research work of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Home Economics.

In a way this is the key chapter to the whole series. For today we're going back to the source of one of the most arresting statements made at the National Nutrition Conference held here in Washington last week, at the call of the President. The statement I have in mind is this - "More than a third of us here in the United States are ill-fed." Or to put it another way, "at least 40 million of us are living on diets rated poor by nutrition standards."

Dr. Stiebeling, as I understand it, you are the person chiefly responsible for finding out those facts and placing them squarely before this conference.

HAZEL K. STIEBELING:

I don't know that it matters very much who found out the facts. What really counts is what we're going to do about these facts now that we have them before us.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

As you see, Wallace, Dr. Stiebeling's like the rest of the scientists. The more important the fact discovered, the more modest the person who makes the discovery.

KADDERLY:

So I notice.

STIEBELING:

It's taken a lot of us working together to find these facts about what American families are eating.

In our coast-to-coast study, for example, first there were the five government agencies who planned the survey....Then there were the field workers who rang doorbells, and asked homemakers to help keep a record of the kinds and quantities of food the families were using in a week....And there were the homemakers - who very kindly and patiently, kept track of this information....Next were the people who tabulated and checked the millions of figures from the family food records.....Finally there were

(Over)

those of us with a background in scientific nutrition who analyzed and rated the diets by nutrition standards.

VAN DEMAN:

Don't let her fool you, Wallace. The driving force in it all was Hazel Stiebeling.

KADDERLY:

I wonder whether she was fortified by the R Vitamin.

VAN DEMAN:

The R Vitamin?

KADDERLY:

Yes, the research vitamin....the vitamin that keeps her hunting for facts...sorting, assembling, publishing...without ever getting tired.

STIEBELING:

No, no, nothing like that.

KADDERLY:

Well, Dr. Stiebeling, tell us this. How do the standards you used for rating family diets measure up with the new yardstick for good nutrition, announced at the National Nutrition Conference here in Washington last week?

STIEBELING:

That's a very good question, Mr. Kadderly. Because the way diets rate- whether good, fair, or poor - depends of course on the standards they're figured by.

We used the best scientific facts available to us at the time. But nutrition research is constantly bringing new facts to light.....particularly on vitamins and minerals.

The new yardstick calls for more calcium, more vitamin C, more riboflavin than was considered necessary when we rated the family diets.

KADDERLY:

Then if you had it to do over now, even a larger proportion than one family diet out of three might fall into the poor class?

STIEBELING:

It's hard to say exactly that. But I'm sure of this. The picture of how well fed we are as a nation wouldn't be any brighter than we showed it. In fact it might be more serious.

For as we dig deeper and deeper into the facts of human nutrition, we find more and more that food does make a difference. It shows up in the bodies of people.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, but there's a bright side to this picture too. While we're finding out what happens when we don't eat the right food, we're also finding out what we need to eat to help us live longer, and have stronger bodies and clearer minds.

STIEBELING:

Yes, one of our biggest problems here in this country is to get everybody aware of what the right food will do for him personally I'm looking forward to the day when everyone has the vision of better health through better nutrition.

KADDERLY:

Of course some families don't have the money to buy the foods for this good diet you speak of, Dr. Stiebeling.

STIEBELING:

That's very true. Our study showed that clearly. But it showed also that thousands and thousands of families who might have a good diet don't lay out their money for the right things. I'm thinking now of families living in town or the city who buy all their food at the grocery store. They don't spend enough of their dollars for the foods called for by the new yardstick for good nutrition.

KADDERLY:

By that, I suppose you mean more milk.....more green leafy vegetables.

STIEBELING:

And more of the Vitamin C-rich group - tomatoes....oranges....grape-fruit....lemons....raw salad greens....strawberries....and melons, in season.

VAN DEMAN:

What about vitamin B₁?

STIEBELING:

Whole-wheat, whole-grain cereals, good old-fashioned dry beans and peas and the new-fashioned soy beans will take care of that.

VAN DEMAN:

Or for those who for any reason can't take whole wheat products, then by all means the new "enriched" bread.

STIEBELING:

That's right.

KADDERLY:

And eggs and lean meat----for protein, and vitamins, and minerals.

STIEBELING:

Yes, they make important contributions along many lines. Besides people like meat. If they have money, they buy meat. But in some parts of the country, people who have to skimp make the mistake of spending too much of their meat money for fat back, or "white meat" as they call it down South.

VAN DEMAN:

Fat meat like that is practically pure calories....Just something to stop the hollow hunger Mr. McNitt talked about the other day at the nutrition conference.

STIEBELING:

Yes, it stops the hollow hunger but leaves the hidden hunger. That's just the trouble we found with too many American diets.

VAN DEMAN:

And it isn't always a question of money.

STIEBELING:

No, I brought along this pictogram to show what happened when families spent 15 cents a meal for the raw foods, for each person.

KADDERLY:

May I see this too?

STIEBELING:

Surely. Turn it so you and Ruth can see it. I know this story upside down.

KADDERLY:

Fifteen cents per meal for the raw foods for each person in the family.....Umm...I'm doing some figuring....Why, that means 45 cents a day for each person...That's a little more than the Army allows for a man's food a day.

STIEBELING:

Yes, this is not a low-cost diet.

VAN DEMAN:

It's about what you would call a moderate cost diet isn't it, Hazel?

STIEBELING:

Just about....Well, now let me show you what happened. These were the diets of families in 100 villages and 44 cities in the North and West....

KADDERLY:

That includes Oregon, Washington, and California, I take it?

STIEBELING:

Yes, and east all the way to Vermont....Now looking at these symbols representing families spending 15 cents at the grocery store for each person's meal, you'll see that hardly a fourth of them had diets we could rate good. Two-thirds were only fair, and an eighth - that is, 12 out of every hundred - had diets definitely poor.

KADDERLY:

How do you account for that?

STIEBELING:

Lack of real appreciation of how important food is to health. And lack of understanding about how to spend the food money. Some people just jog along the easiest way. Think "oh, well today's dinner is just one more meal in a lifetime. Next week I'll really settle down and plan meals carefully. Next week I'll take my plan to the grocery store and be sure I buy the right foods to give us a well-balanced diet."

KADDERLY:

But next week never comes.

STIEBELING:

That seems to be what the figures tell. When a family can afford to spend 45 cents a day for food supplies for each person at table, there's no excuse for that family not having the right kind of diet for good nutrition.

KADDERLY:

Dr. Stiebeling, you're getting me a little disturbed about my own food habits. I begin to wonder if I'm as careful as I should be about choosing my lunch at the cafeteria counter.....

VAN DEMAN:

That's the effect the nutrition conference is having on all of us. I'm very nutrition-conscious myself.

STIEBELING:

Well, you know what you can do about it every day and at every meal. And don't think I'm suggesting you take any of the joy out of eating.

VAN DEMAN:

No, no, we understand. It's putting the joy in, by eating foods that will help build up good health....help us to do our jobs better..... help us to have a longer life and a happier one.

KADDERLY:

Ruth, what about that food guide you had up here once....that check list of what we need every day?

VAN DEMAN:

Oh, you mean "Eat the Right Food to Help Keep You Fit."

KADDERLY:

That's it. Is it still available?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, a new supply came in just in time for the nutrition conference.

KADDERLY:

That seems to me the logical follow up to what Dr. Stiebeling's been telling us about our shortcomings in diet. That's a guide to good diet in a very simple form that any of us can check ourselves by every day.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it would slide right into your pocket, Wallace. Nobody would notice if you looked at it while you're standing in the cafeteria line. Or you might do as the homemaker who wrote me - nail it to the cupboard door.

KADDERLY:

Then if the Bureau of Home Economics is willing, I'll suggest that any of our Farm and Home friends who are interested write for a copy of "Eat the Right Food to Help Keep You Fit."

VAN DEMAN:

For short we call it "Eat the Right."

KADDERLY:

Good enough. Then if anybody puts "Eat the Right" on a post card and sends it to the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D. C., you'll know what they want.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, if all the things we're asked for were as easy to identify as that, the girls in the mailroom would be happy.

KADDERLY:

(Ad lib offer of leaflet)

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